



This Is Reggae Music: The Story of Jamaica's Music

By Lloyd Bradley

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This Is Reggae Music: The Story of Jamaica's Music By Lloyd Bradley

Jamaica is a small country in the Caribbean, 146 miles wide and populated by fewer than three million people. Nevertheless, it has exerted a more powerful hold on international popular music than any nation besides England and America. From Prince Buster to Burning Spear, Lee "Scratch" Perry to Yellowman, Bob Marley to Shabba Ranks, reggae music is one of the most dynamic and powerful musical forms of the twentieth century. And, as Lloyd Bradley shows in his deft, definitive, and always entertaining book, it is and always has been the people's music. Born in the sound systems of the Kingston slums, reggae was the first music poor Jamaicans could call their own, and as it spread throughout the world, it always remained fluid, challenging, and distinctly Jamaican. Based on six years of research -- original interviews with most of reggae's key producers, musicians, and international players -- and a lifelong enthusiasm for one of the most remarkable of the world's musics, *This Is Reggae Music* is the definitive history of reggae.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

With flair, skill, passion and stamina, Bradley (*Reggae on CD*) fluidly traces Jamaican music's odyssey from the pure energy of 1950s Kingston's open-air sound system scene to the eruption of homegrown ska, the "smooove of Rocksteady," reggae's depth; holding his nose for digital/ragga/roughneck, he regains optimism for the emergent new roots genre. But the meat lies in how Jamaica's poverty, societal strife and "politricks," tempered by the creativity, spirituality and upbeatness of its people, yielded the music, which for better and worse reached the U.K., the U.S. and beyond. Born in London to Jamaican immigrants, Bradley spent six years studying his subject. Avoiding the who/what/when tedium that encumbers many music histories, he reveals the whys and hows. The legendary Prince Buster whets readers' appetites in the foreword, then passes the mike to Bradley. Hardly a ham, Bradley passes it often to the originators and major players (including Lee "Scratch" Perry, Big Youth, Burning Spear) for lengthy, lively quotes and anecdotes. He pays scholarly attention to musical detail and attempts to highlight everyone who has made reggae waves, not just the stars. He writes, "It's a brave publisher that will put out a volume about reggae in general without its jacket artwork conspicuously featuring Bob Marley's face." And a brave writer who forestalls addressing the master's impact until the 17th chapter. "For many, Marley is reggae"; but it's a "colossal irony that, during his tenure at the top, reggae's most famous exponent exerted practically no influence over the music's development at grassroots i.e., Kingston studios level." Such insider-expert revelations will delight reggae's many devotees. Agent, Sophie Brewer, Penguin UK.

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From Library Journal

For most casual listeners, reggae music can be reduced to one artist Bob Marley. This book, however, proves in exhaustive detail that there is greater breadth and depth to the 40-year-old art form. Bradley, who ran his own sound system for reggae dances in the late 1970s and has written for many British music periodicals, is well qualified to present a history of this scope. In a witty and engaging manner, he traces the development of the genre from mento to sound system dances, ska, rock steady, reggae, dub, toasting, (precursor to American rap), and many other offshoots. He also provides comprehensive and incisive histories of the Jamaican and British cultures and societies (touching on many Rastafarian influences) that acted as catalysts for the development of the music. Readers who want to learn about Marley are still best served by Timothy White's *Catch a Fire: The Life of Bob Marley* (LJ 6/15/83; Owl Bks., 1998, rev. ed.). But for enthusiasts, this book is fabulous, on a par with Kevin O'Brien Chang and Wayne Chen's *Reggae Routes: The Story of Jamaican Music* (Temple Univ., 1998). Highly recommended for large public or academic libraries. Bill Walker, Stockton-San Joaquin Cty. P.L., CA

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From [Booklist](#)

Bradley's rambling account identifies and traces the genealogy of reggae, which grew out of the preceding Jamaican pop-music styles of ska and rock steady; flourished in the '70s; and then faded in Jamaica while surviving as rather a cult passion in the U.S. and the U.K. Focusing on reggae as a commercial entity rather than as a means of proselytizing Rastafarianism, Bradley nevertheless describes Rasta influences on it and how it affected Jamaican culture. Most fans know about the One Love Peace Concert, at which Bob Marley got rival national candidates Michael Manley and Edward Seaga to publicly shake hands during a veritable

armed street war of an election campaign, but Bradley also notes July 7, 1977, when "Jamaica registered record absenteeism from work and school" because of the Rastas' cabbalistic reading of the date--7-7-77--as a sure sign of the apocalypse. Fortunately, the world and the music survived, though Bradley seems amused and mystified about continuing interest in a music that is passe in its homeland. A genuine keeper among reggae books. *Mike Tribby*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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